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ABSTRACT

Two Ohio State University commencement addresses, one by former Secretary of Labor Willard Wirtz in March 1977 and the other by former President Gerald R. Ford in August 1974, deal with the topic of education and work. Willard Wirtz discusses the problems of unemployment among youth and the elderly and cites the need for national education/work policy to resolve the problems. He mentions programs suggested by President Carter and calls for a new economics which would recognize that there is a limitless amount that needs to be done in the country and in the world, and that while some natural resources are in critically short supply, the human resource is boundless. He suggests a viable economics that "puts people in the first place instead of someplace else on down the line." President Ford proposes a new partnership between labor and educators, suggesting that the universities open their doors to working men and women, not only as students but also as teachers, and that labor open its ranks to researchers and problem-solvers of the campuses whose research can give better tools and methods to workers. Ford says that he will ask Congress to extend two laws--one providing for higher education, the other for vocational education; and that he has asked the Secretaries of Commerce, Labor, and Health, Education, and Welfare to report on new ways of bringing the world of work and the institutions closer together. (LMS)

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Occasional Paper No. 28

BRINGING THE WORLD OF WORK AND THE INSTITUTIONS OF EDUCATION CLOSER TOGETHER

Two Commencement Addresses at The Ohio State University

by

Willard Wirtz
March 17, 1977

and

Gerald R. Ford
August 30, 1974

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH, EDUCATION & WELFARE
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THE CENTER MISSION STATEMENT

The Center for Vocational Education's mission is to increase the ability of diverse agencies, institutions, and organizations to solve educational problems relating to individual career planning, preparation, and progression. The Center fulfills its mission by:

- Generating knowledge through research
- Developing educational programs and products
- Evaluating individual program needs and outcomes
- Installing educational programs and products
- Operating information systems and services
- Conducting leadership development and training programs

PREFACE

The problem of youth unemployment, scarcity of jobs for college graduates, and an increasing concern for job satisfaction among American workers has created a national dialogue on establishing improved linkages between educational programs and the world of work and the need to re-examine these roles and relationships. Two distinguished national leaders have addressed the topic of education and work in commencement addresses at The Ohio State University. At the Spring 1977 Commencement, Dr. Willard Wirtz, President, National Manpower Institute and U.S. Secretary of Labor under Presidents Kennedy and Johnson, addressed the seriousness of problems in the job market and the need for national education/work policy to resolve them. Less than three years ago, former President Gerald Ford spoke to the 1974 Summer Commencement of the need for new ways to bring the world of work and the institutions of education closer together.

Each of these distinguished national leaders have brought unique perspectives and insights to building bridges between education and work.

The Center for Vocational Education and The Ohio State University are pleased to present the distinguished remarks of these two national leaders on the topic, "Bringing the World of Work and the Institutions of Education Closer Together."

Robert E. Taylor
Director
The Center for Vocational Education

Remarks of the President of the National Manpower Institute
Former U.S. Secretary of Labor
Willard Wirtz

March 17, 1977

The recently published *Letters of E. B. White* include the telegram this remarkable master of ideas and words once sent, collect, declining an invitation to speak at another distinguished university: "Sorry cannot speak don't know how many thanks."

I don't know how either, especially on occasions such as this. Commencement speakers seem to me to come off invariably bearing striking resemblance to grandfather-clocks: standing some six feet tall, typically ponderous in construction, traditional rather than functional, making more noise than progress in the monotonous telling of nothing more noteworthy or memorable than the time of day.

This is partly a function of circumstance. The imported orator is reduced to gibberish in the futile attempt at simultaneous satisfaction of the President's preoccupation with brevity, the faculty's standards of profundity, and the media's appetite for hard news—while he is also assuring the assembled parents that everything is now clear ahead on the tracks they have spent twenty years laying and at the same time apologizing to the graduates for those tracks being in fact not clear at all.

It is this last concern I mean to speak to.

How many of you in this class, including those going on to more education, are reasonably clear about what you will be doing a year from now and reasonably satisfied with the prospects?

Recognizing commencement as a day for mannered discourse about pleasant matters, I am going to do what I can to fit into that pattern the unhousebroken fact that the Class of 1977 is graduating at a time of unprecedented question about the value, at least in the marketplace, of a college education.

Some of you will recall this as the subject of the commencement address here at Ohio State in August 1974. The speaker had just become President of the country, under chaotic circumstances. Yet Gerald Ford looked that morning beyond the wreckage in Washington to consider the question of why so many college graduates are being frustrated in their attempts to find the employment for which they have fully prepared themselves. He called it another Catch 22. At the end of his obviously heartfelt, thoughtful, and constructive remarks, he announced that he was requesting the Secretaries of Commerce, Labor, and Health, Education and Welfare to recommend "new ways to bring the world of work and the institutions of education closer together."

That was two and a half years ago. Yet in the time that has passed this situation has not improved. It has probably worsened.

The recommendations President Ford requested of the three Cabinet members were never made, at least formally. It would be unfairest criticism, however, to imply that this was the consequence of default or that nothing came of that initiative. To the contrary. A group of competent and committed

men and women from the three departments went to work seriously and diligently on the follow-up assignments they were given. That no formal report emerged from their efforts was a reflection of learning two important lessons about this problem.

One of these, so undramatic that a succession of Presidents have been unable to arouse the country to its importance, involves the organization of the executive branch of the federal government. The people charged with building new bridges between the worlds of education and work couldn't find the necessary bridges between the three departments. The bridge builders couldn't get past the turf protectors.

There won't be an effective national education/work policy until the iron web of established institutionalism in the federal executive is broken. It is an encouraging current development that the Congress is apparently now about to consent to a new President's advice that the executive departments must be reorganized along functional lines instead of by the metes and bounds of institutionalized vested interests.

The other lesson from the initiative President Ford launched here goes deeper. His remarks that day reflected an assumption which was then part of the conventional wisdom: that if education and work have gotten out of kilter it is the gears on the education side that require attention. Put differently, the general assumption in this country two and a half years ago was that if we will just prepare young people for the jobs that need doing, this will all work out.

What we have now come to realize, and this is surely part of the reason no blueprints for new bridges were ever drawn up, is that the need here is in only comparatively small part for bridges; and the problem involves only secondarily the courses students take. These matters must be attended to. But the accusing truth which has now gotten the floor is that the real problem here is on the work side.

Facing it squarely, we recognize now the fact of a comparatively recent historic confluence of several disparate forces that have been gathering for some time: such an increasing sophistication of technology that robots now offer employers, at less than living wages, many of the talents a baccalaureate degree implies; a dwindling of critical natural resources; a rising level of overall unemployment which has brought it to a plateau with standing room only for most younger workers; a tardy recognition of equal employment rights without regard to the irrelevancies of sex and ethnicity; a proliferation of people's numbers; and by no means least an almost sudden decision to broadly extend the educational franchise.

There is some prospect of demographic relief from part of this five or ten years from now. That will be too little, too late.

The short and blunt of it is that there are not today, and there are not going to be as long as we hold to our present course, enough jobs using the education which is being taken with unemployment as its purpose.

There's no point in dwelling on these facts. You in this class already know them and you face them. Nothing could be said here to change their impact on your own personal situations.

Let's consider very briefly, instead, whether there is anything that can be done and is likely to be done in broader and longer range terms about this situation.

One possibility is appealing at least, but only, for its logic. Facing a similar situation, Sweden has recently decided by legislation to ration higher education. It will be provided this year to only 38,000 young people in that country and they will be assigned to seven different areas identified in terms of projected manpower needs. Japan follows a comparable policy though by different processes. Such rationing and allocation are basic features of the systems in Russia and China.

There is no answer for us.

A week ago today, President Carter sent a formal message to Congress outlining a proposed youth employment policy. This is an encouraging message, both for the continued priority of Presidential concern about the youth problem it reflects and for the way it builds on present youth employment programs while at the same time providing stimulants for new initiatives.

Although the program the President outlines centers on federally supported programs for the employment of youth disadvantaged by such things as not having had a college education, which is where a federal legislative program has to start under today's circumstances, it recognizes the need for training and service as well as for "job" opportunities. It rejects the narcotic notion that public employment alone is a sufficient long-range answer to youth or any other kind of unemployment.

The "community service" proposals in the President's message seem to me to lead us closer to the consideration of the values of a much broader youth service program in this country. There is increasing question whether the present form of voluntary military service program is going to work out, particularly if additional non-military employment opportunities are provided by the government to those who have been volunteering for military service because they couldn't find anything else. I think it is almost certain that we will move fairly soon now to some broader form of youth service program, of which military service will be one part. The hardest problem of course is working out a solution to the voluntary/mandatory dilemma. We know that a great many young people, including a lot of those who go to college, would welcome an enlarged service opportunity.

Last week's Presidential message does not, however, reach the problem of the underemployment of college graduates. Nor is it likely that any legislative or governmental program will, for what is involved here goes deeper than laws advisedly reach.

This isn't just a question of whether we are going to use college graduates' talents. It is a question of how much of the *total* human talent, the human resource, we are going to put to use.

Forgive my making the point perhaps too personally by admitting that just this Monday, I, too, "graduated"—as a member of a class almost as large, nationwide, as the Class of 1977. You are going to get diplomas, degrees. The members of my class are getting, in the mail, notices of our eligibility for Social Security—along, in a number of cases, with job dismissal notices. We recognize geriatric's realities. Please understand, though, the suggestion that six months from now as many members of my class as yours are going to be eating their hearts out because there are no takers for the talents they have worked hard to develop and unquestionably possess.

It is time we recognize that the only reason the unemployment figures are being maintained at even tolerable levels in this country, if you can count 7.5 percent tolerable, is because we are turning more older people out to pasture earlier and earlier and with lessening excuse and keeping more younger people in school longer and longer.

Add to those in your class and mine the millions of American women for whom the equal employment opportunity accorded them by law ten years ago has proved counterfeit so far because of the bars that are still in the way of combining career-motherhood with career-anything else—just little things like employer's understandable preferment of full-time over part-time employment.

Add, too, all those who are stuck at mid-career in jobs using only a little of what is inside them.

Is this all just in the ordinary and inevitable course of things? Does it all add up to reason for wholesale discouragement? I don't think so at all.

I realize that these remarks move at this point from what I believe I know to what I only know I believe. But it doesn't bother me, when the fuel in the tank of experience runs out, to rely on our critical reserve supply of faith tested by reason but fortified with a little tough-minded idealism.

I think there is today increasing reason for believing that a coalition constituency in this country is ready now to provide a working majority, if it can be mustered, in support of national policy based on a new economics: an economics that simply puts people in the first place instead of someplace down the line. Call it, in E. F. Schumacher's phrase, an "economics as if people mattered." Or call it a human resource economics.

I mean an economics which would start from the recognition that with all of this talk about the limited perimeters of growth there are two perameters in the equation which seem to get overlooked: one is the limitless amount that needs to be done in this country and in the world; the other is that while some *natural* resources are in critically short supply the *human* resource is boundless.

Isn't there an economics which would recognize the need for a responsibly self-sustaining system but would start from a commitment to make the fullest practicable use of the most highly developed form of whatever talents are inside people—instead of starting from a consideration of the maximally profitable use, including the misuse, of the elements inside the fragilely thin crust of the planet.

Such a policy would require, I suppose, putting all major enterprises to the testing of their comparative drain on dwindling natural resources and their comparative use of the highly developed, meaning educated, human resource. This would present a hard question in determining, for example, the socially desirable balance of various uses of various forms of the automobile. But the Concorde would be on its face a monstrous absurdity.

Such a policy would lead necessarily to a review and redefinition of which kinds of human activity should be considered compensable and properly included in the Gross National Product—which would probably be renamed the Net National Strength. Nothing would be excluded from consideration just because women, before our awakening, were willing to do those things gratuitously: housework, for example, and bearing and raising children.

Such a new economics would include a rethinking—zero-based thinking I guess, in today's Washington vernacular—of how much of people's lives most advisedly go into work and in what units. Any assumption that the right answer is eight hours a day—between 8:00 and 5:00—five days a week, between the ages of about twenty-five and sixty-five or less, would be completely reexamined. The advantages of full-time over part-time employment and the disadvantages of flexitime, lucratively speaking, would be considered in a brighter light which would include what such things mean, humanly speaking.

Perhaps most centrally, there would be a deliberate, thorough review of what is today's reality only because it became custom: that life is divided into three time traps—youth for education, maturity for work, and older age for denial of both of these opportunities. It would probably be decided that sixteen or more years of education at one, long, uninterrupted sitting is not the best answer for nearly as many young people as are following this course today. The trade-off would be the development of standard procedures for significant continued education and retraining—perhaps by extending the practice of paid sabbatical leaves far beyond the teaching profession, possibly to everybody.

I realize that this is only the sketchiest suggestion of what something along these lines might mean; and that I have said too little to be persuasive, too much to be discreet. Woodrow Wilson complained once that twenty minutes in a public forum is time only to commit a compound fracture of an idea.

I simply suggest, because it is the only answer I can live with when I get there, that the answer to this question of whether we are ever again going to use fully education's potential economic value depends entirely on whether we have what it takes to insist on an economics that is viable but that "puts people in the first place instead of someplace else on down the line." The issue, I suspect, is not ultimately one of economics but of politics.

Two footnotes:

First, these remarks will seem to have assumed that the only purpose of education is to prepare for work. It isn't. Your commencement speaker at the December exercises, President Robbin Fleming of the University of Michigan, was characteristically thoughtful and eloquent in developing this same case in terms of education's other and superior values. I simply incorporate by reference here all that he said there. He in turn, I think, would agree that it will be easier to find the necessary support for those other values if education also "pays off" in what remains our most obvious currency.

Second, I know nothing said here meets the questions you in this class will wake up to tomorrow morning. Just one moment on that. It is some way implicit in what has been suggested that you are at least entitled to do your own job of separating the nonsense and the shibboleths out of what habit and custom have dictated as the current fashions of "success." This doesn't mean settling for whatever you can get. There is clearer reason, though, than used to be apparent for turning to what would be interesting and worthwhile by your own measure rather than by somebody else's. If talk about the work ethnic seems to mock your immediate circumstance, it seems worth reminding that the service ethnic, though less advertised, has roots running at least as deep in our underlying ideals.

If that, too, leads nowhere, leaving college not seeming at the moment worth what you paid for it, perhaps there will be at least a relaxing smile in recalling the poignantly scrawled and misspelled graffitti on the New York subway wall: "If yu think educashun is xpensiv, tri ignorans."

Remarks of the President of the United States
Gerald R Ford

August 30, 1974

President Enarson, President Flemming, Governor Gilligan, Senator Metzenbaum, Congressman Sam Devine, Congressman Chalmers Wylie, Mr. Mayor, honored graduates, members of your faculty, friends, and guests.

It is a very great privilege and exceedingly high honor to participate in this wonderful graduation ceremony. And at the outset, may I congratulate each and every one of the graduates.

But if I might add, I think appropriate congratulations to the members of your family—husbands, wives, mothers, fathers, and others who have done so much to make it possible for you to be here on this wonderful occasion.

And I think it is appropriate also that we add a special tribute to the members of the faculty who have likewise contributed to this very wonderful occasion.

So much has happened in the few months since you were so very kind to ask me to participate on this occasion. I was then America's first instant Vice President—and now, America's first instant President. The United States Marine Band is so confused they don't know whether to play "Hail to the Chief" or "You've Come a Long Way, Baby."

Obviously, it is a very great honor for me to be at Ohio State University, sometimes known as the Land of the Free and the Home of Woody Hayes. I met Woody at the airport. We just had our picture taken together and when the picture appears in today's Dispatch, I am pretty sure what the caption will say: "Woody Hayes, and Friend."

As many of you know, I have had a great interest in football for a good many years. I played center for the University of Michigan and I still remember my senior year back in 1934. The Wolverines played Ohio in Columbus, and we lost thirty four to nothing. And to make it even worse, we lost seven out of our eight ball games, but what really hurt was that my teammates, after the end of the season, voted me the most valuable player. I didn't know whether to smile or sue. But I want you to know that I have a great feeling of kinship with this graduating class. I understand that you have all taken your final final examinations this week. As your new President, I feel like I am just beginning mine. They are tough, both at home and abroad, but we will make it. Instead of dwelling on how my team lost here in Columbus in 1934, I would prefer to advance the clock to 1974 and talk about winning against the odds that confront today's graduates and all America.

The first of these problems is summed up by the editor of your campus newspaper. She reports that the one dominant question in the minds of this year's graduates is very simple: How can I get a job that makes sense as well as money?

Your professors tell you that education unlocks creative genius and imagination and that you must develop your human potential. And students have accepted this. But then Catch 22 enters

the picture. You spend four years in school, graduate, go into the job market, and are told that the rules have changed. There is no longer a demand for your specialty—another educational discipline is now required.

And so one or two more years of study inevitably follows and you again return to the job market. Yes, what you now offer is salable, except that competition is very tough. To succeed you must acquire further credentials so you go back to the university and ultimately emerge with a Masters or even a Ph.D.

And you know what happens next? You go out and look for a job and now they say you are overqualified.

In one form or another, this is a Three Shell Game. Our society has been playing tricks with our greatest natural energy source. That is you. And this has got to be stopped.

Although this Administration will not make promises it cannot keep, I do want to pledge one thing to you here and now. I will do everything in my power to bring education and employers together in a new climate of credibility—an atmosphere in which universities turn out scholars and employers turn them on.

Ever since President Abraham Lincoln initiated the concept of Land Grant colleges, set up to bring people and students closer to the land, the federal government has been interested in the practical application of education.

Take the example of Project Independence. Frankly, I am not satisfied with the progress we are making toward energy independence by 1980. However, this is a problem that I can appropriately discuss at a Labor Day weekend commencement. It concerns both the academic community and our great labor organizations.

I am not speaking of gasoline for a Labor Day trip to the lake or seashore. I am speaking of fuel and raw materials for our factories which are threatened by shortages and high costs. Skills and intellect must harmonize so that the wheels of industry not only hum but sing.

I propose a great new partnership of labor and educators. Why can't the universities of America open their doors wide to working men and women, not only as students, but as teachers. Practical problem-solvers can contribute much to education, whether or not they hold degrees. The fact of the matter is that education is being strangled—by degrees.

I want to see labor open its ranks to researchers and problem-solvers of the campuses whose research can give better tools and methods to the workman. I want to see a two-way street speeding the traffic of scientific developments, speeding the creation of new jobs, speeding the day of self-sufficiency in energy, and speeding an era of increased production for America and the world.

What good is training if it is not applied to jobs? What good are factories if they are shut down? What good is business and industry without those who solve their problems, perform their jobs, and spend their paychecks?

Next year, I will ask Congress to extend two laws which are expiring. One provides for higher education, the other for vocational education. Both are essential because we need new jobs and we need new skills, academically as well as vocationally.

Your government will help you create a vocational environment responsive to our needs, but the government cannot achieve personal fulfillment for each of you. You, in this case, are the essential ingredient. Your determination, your dedication, your will, will make the significant difference.

For you, the time has come to test the theories of the academic world in the laboratory of life. As President, I invite students and graduates and faculties to contribute their energies and their genius in the solution of massive problems facing America. I invite your ideas and your initiatives in fighting inflation, in providing realistic education, in making sure our free enterprise system continues to give freedom as well as enterprise.

Show us how to increase productivity. Show us how to combine new life styles with old responsibilities. Show us how universities can work with industry and labor unions to devise a whole new community of learning across this great land. Show us how work-study programs can become a part of the ongoing educational process. Show us how new skills can improve technology while humanizing its use.

A French statesman once observed that war is much too important to be left to generals. Our Nation's future is far too important to be left only to Presidents or other officials of the federal government.

I like the phrase of a former great President, Theodore Roosevelt: "The Government is us; we are the Government, you and I." Oh yes, your vote and your voice are essential, as essential as mine if each American is to take individual responsibility for our collective future.

As you move into that job that makes sense and money to you and you will find it—you move from a position of strength. With the war over and the draft ended, your duty now to your country is to enlist in the campaigns currently being waged against our urgent domestic threats, especially inflation, which is Public Enemy No. 1

Abroad, we are seeking new peaceful relationships, not only with the Soviet Union and the People's Republic of China, but with all peoples—industrial, underdeveloped nations, every nation, if we possibly can.

There will be continuity in our foreign policy and continued realism in our self-defense.

At home the government must help people in doing things they cannot achieve as individuals. Accordingly, I have asked the Secretaries of Commerce, Labor, and HEW to report to me new ways to bring the world of work and the institutions of education closer together. For your government as well as you, the time has come for a fusion of the realities of a work-a-day life with the teaching of academic institutions.

As a starter, the Department of Labor will shortly announce a pilot program to improve occupational information for graduates and others in making career choices. There will be grants for state and local initiatives to provide data on occupations available and to help channel the potential employees into positions which are not only personally satisfying but financially rewarding.

The states have always assumed the primary responsibility for public education. That tradition in my judgment is very sound and Ohio State University and my alma mater, the University of

Michigan are excellent examples. But there is now too much confusion about which level of government is to play which role in post-secondary education.

I am directing the responsible agencies of the federal government to make a new evaluation of where we are, where we want to go, and where we can reasonably expect to be five years from now.

Discussions will be held with governors, state legislators, academic leaders, federal officials, and the consumers of education. Our goal of quality education is on a collision course with the escalating demands for the public dollar. Everyone must have a clearer understanding and a clear agreement on who is responsible for the specific aspects of direction and the financing of a college education.

Often times our federal government tries to do too much and unfortunately achieves too little. There are, for example, approximately 380 separate federal educational programs beyond the high school level, some duplicating others, administered by some fifty separate executive agencies. The result inevitably is a bureaucracy that often provides garbled guidelines instead of taut lifelines to good and available jobs.

But let us look for a moment beyond the campus and beyond Washington.

In 1972, I was fortunate to visit the People's Republic of China. With four times the population of the United States, a nation growing at the rate of two New York Cities every twelve months, that vast nation is making very significant technological progress. From a personal observation as well as by records, you can see the Chinese productivity is gaining momentum, and the majority of the Chinese on the mainland today are young people, highly motivated, extremely well disciplined.

As fellow human beings, we celebrate the rising capacities of the Chinese nation, a people with a firm belief in their own destiny.

However, as Americans, motivated by free competition, we see a distant challenge. And I believe all Americans welcome that challenge.

We must compete internationally not only to maintain the balance of trade in our standard of living but to offer to the world's impoverished examples and opportunities for a better life. We should do that for humane and for perhaps even self-interest.

Let this peaceful competition, however, animate the last quarter of the twentieth century. And I am confident that America's youth will make the difference. You are America's greatest untapped source of energy. But energy unused is energy wasted.

It is my judgement that we must make extraordinary efforts to apply our know-how, our capital, our technology, and our human resources to increase productivity at a faster rate. Unfortunately, inflation is creating a national state of public anxiety. Productivity, yours as well as mine, must improve if we are to have less of an inflationary economy. In the long-run, it is the only way that we can raise wages without inflationary price increases. It is essential in creating new jobs and increasing real wages. In a growing economy, every one, labor, management and the consumer, wins when productivity expands.

At this very moment of America's history, we have the knowledge and the material resources to do almost anything that anyone of us, or all of us collectively, can imagine. We can explore the depth of the ocean. We can put a man on the moon. We can reach for the stars.

But great problems confront us here on earth. To face these problems, we need even more than technology, we need more than programs. We need a belief in ourselves. We need the will, the dedication, the discipline to take action.

Let us take a new look at ourselves as Americans. Let us draw from every resource available. Let us seek a real partnership between the academic community and the rest of our society. Let us aspire to excellence in every aspect of our national life.

Now, may I close with a word between friends? Sometimes deep feelings can get lost in words. I don't want that to happen here today. And so I would like to share with you something that I feel very deeply: The world is not a lonely place. There is light and life and love enough for all of us. And I ask you, and all Americans, to reach out to join hands with me—and together we will seek it out.